

The
EVOLUTION
of
DRESS FASTENING DEVICES

From the bone pin to the

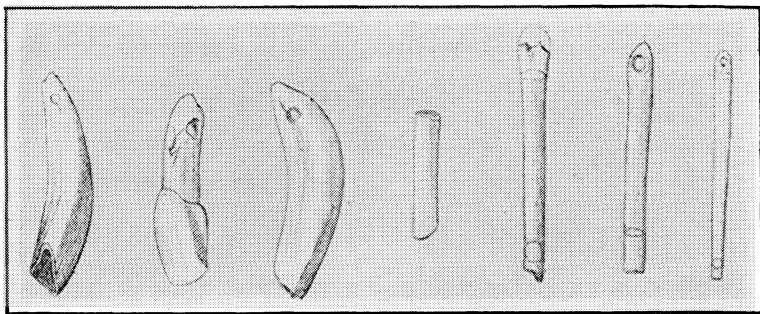
Koh-i-noor

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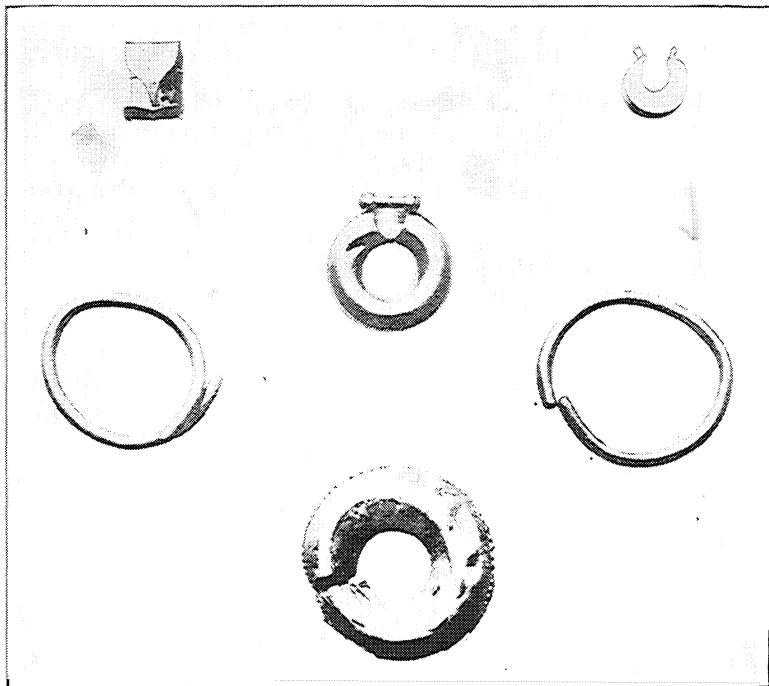
Written by
H. H. MANCHESTER, A. B.
for
WALDES & CO., Inc.
The World's Largest Snap Fastener Manufacturers
Long Island City, N. Y.

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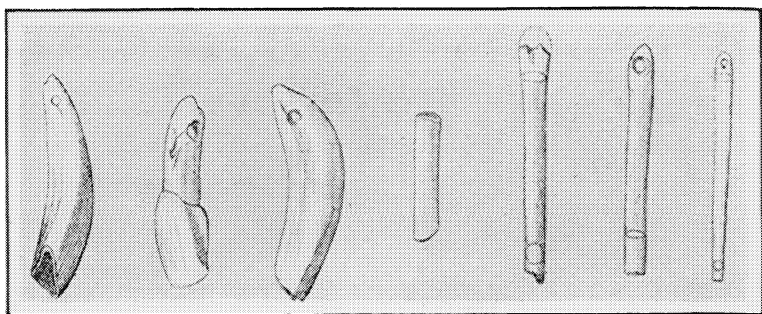


Bone needles, 20,000 years old, from prehistoric caves

merged into the New Stone Age. This was marked by the development of pottery, agriculture, and weaving. Toward the end of this era, some six thousand years ago, the curtain of history rose in Egypt, and we begin to find in the wall paintings and other relics in the Egyptian tombs, sufficiently full evidence to give us a conception of the costume, and to a lesser extent, of the dress fasteners of the Egyptians.

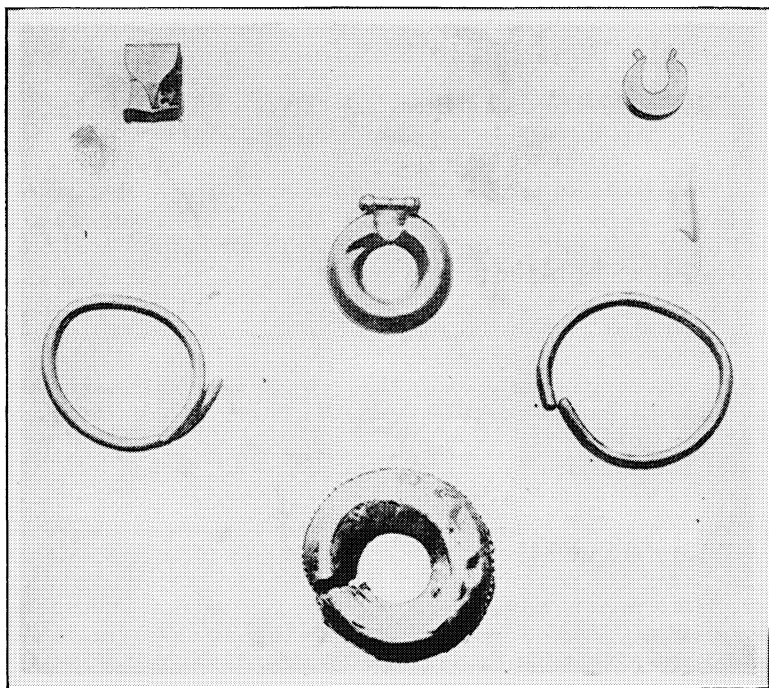


Types of Egyptian dress fasteners from 3000 to 5,000 years old

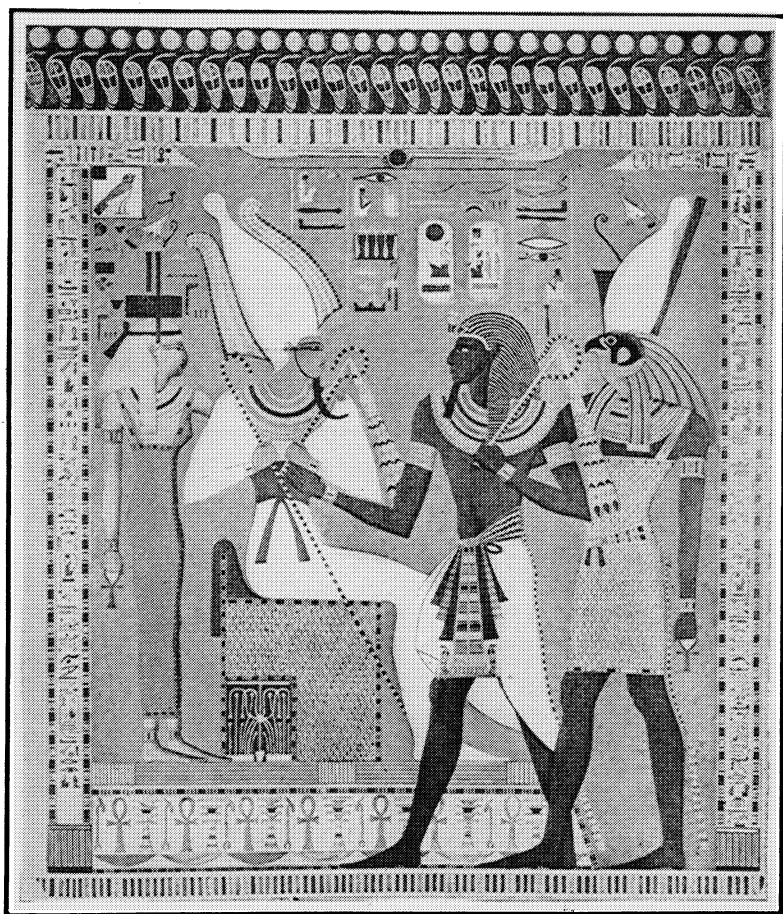


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Types of Egyptian dress fasteners from 3000 to 5,000 years old



An Egyptian tomb painting over 3,000 years old, illustrating belt brooches and straps over the shoulder

In the Old Kingdom of Memphis, some 5,500 years ago, the dress of even the Egyptian noble was a short skirt extending from the waist to the knees. This was drawn around the waist with a belt, which, in the earliest period, was fastened with a knot, but later with a kind of clasp or brooch.

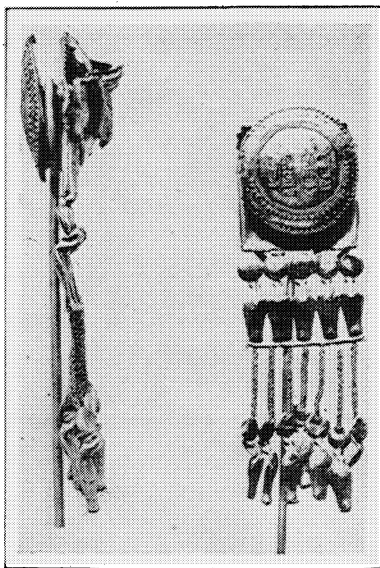
The upper part of the body was regularly bare, but on special occasions a fancy skin, such as that of the panther, was thrown over the shoulders. This was fastened either in front or at the side. In one tomb painting it is fastened in front by the head being tied to one fore paw, while the other fore paw is secured to the side of the skin.

At that time, and in fact for many centuries thereafter, the costume of the Egyptian noble women was a straight slip extend-

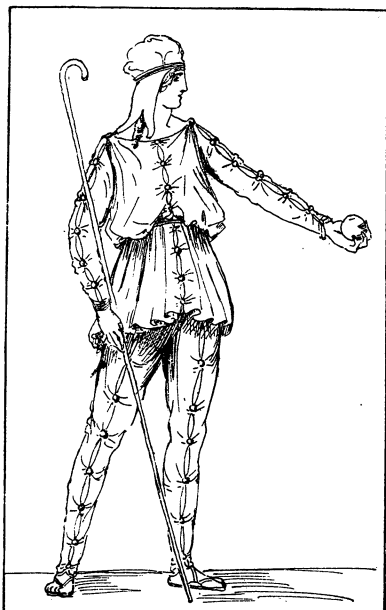
ing from the chest to the ankles, and held in place by bands over the shoulders, though these were not always deemed necessary. These bands might be part of the dress, or separate straps which were either sewed in place or fastened with pins or brooches.

At the beginning of Egyptian history copper was just coming into use, and pins were made of that material, as well as of hard wood, bone, horn, and ivory.

Under the Theban Empire, which began some 3,500 years ago, the noble men and women wore over the garments already described a thin cloak. Often no fasteners were evident upon this, but sometimes it appears caught to-



A gold and jeweled belt brooch of Rameses XII



A Greek representation of Paris, illustrating a Phrygian dress

gether with jewelled ornaments.

At that period the brooch for the girdle became an article of adornment, and was much elaborated. Frequently a pendant was suspended from it, that in the case of the kings and wealthier nobles was ornamented with all sorts of precious and semi-precious jewels.

A number of dress fasteners, which have been preserved in the tombs and have been discovered in recent years, throw a good deal of light on the evolution of these devices.

Some of them are simply rings which could be opened at one side. The ends were pointed and could be sprung open to admit the garment,

and closed to hold it in place. One side of these rings was usually ornamented, and might even have a pendant attached.

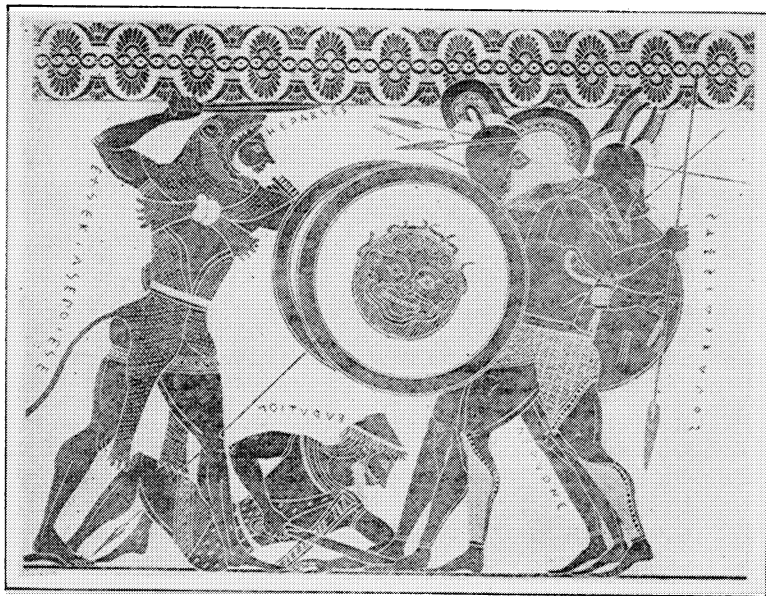
In some cases both ends of the ring were curved so that they could be caught together, thus acting on somewhat the same principle as a safety pin. In fact genuine safety pins were known at that date, though they seem to have been little used in Egypt.

A more striking method of action was for the brooch to have two small rings between which the cloth was inserted where it was held in place by pushing a pin through the rings, which thus acted on the principle of a bolt.

Although the Egyptians had what, from their form, might be called buttons, they seem scarcely to have been used as dress fasteners, but were sewed on the upper garments of the soldiers to form a sort of fish-scale armor which was flexible, and at the same time able to ward off an ordinary straight or downward blow.

The costume of the Babylonians and Assyrians was a long cloak with sleeves which held it in place without the use of buckles or clasps. For this reason dress fasteners played only an unimportant part in their toilet.

Some of the other peoples of Asia Minor, however, such as the Phrygians and Lydians, wore trousers, which were fastened around the waist with a sash and clasp, and a mantle which was



An archaic Greek picture of Herakles in the lion skin, his head in its mouth and the paws tied in front



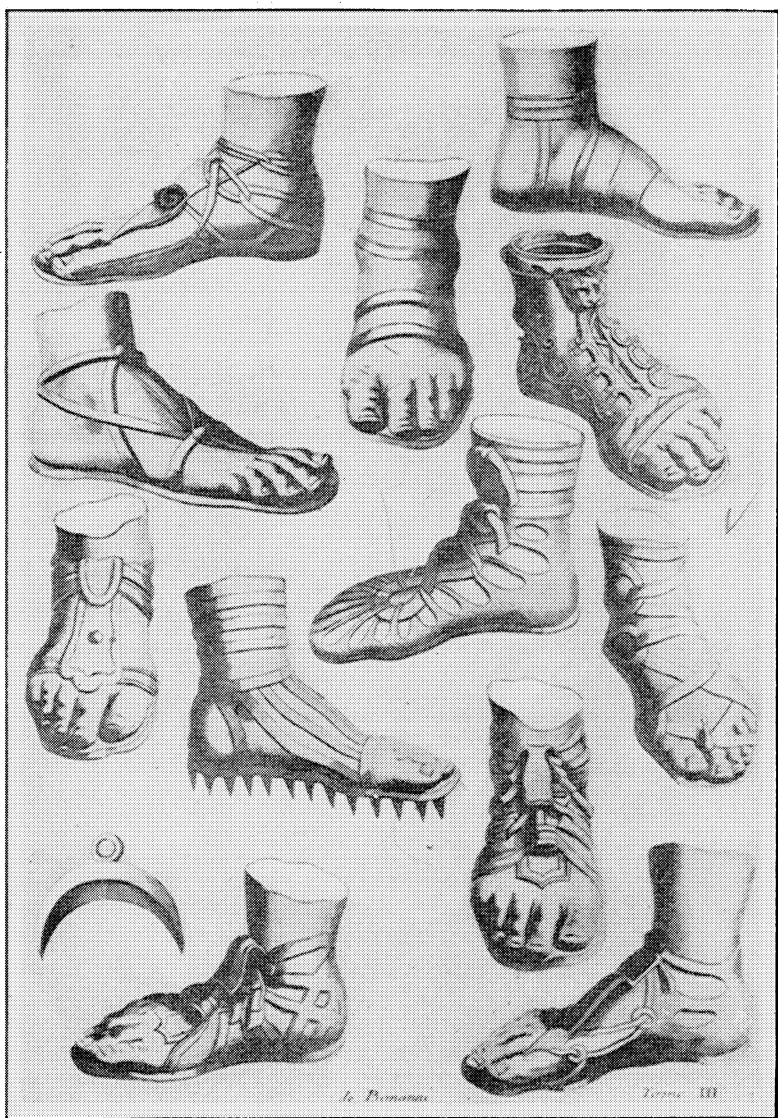
An ancient Greek plate painting showing brooches on the shoulder and either brooches or buttons down the arm

secured over the shoulder with a brooch. There is even a representation of Paris on a vase painting, in which the trousers are caught all the way down both legs with a number of small buttons, or possibly round brooches.

The ancient Greek and Roman costumes were in such decided contrast to the trousered garb of some of the Asiatics, and remained so long in vogue, that we have almost forgotten that trousers were ever worn in ancient times.

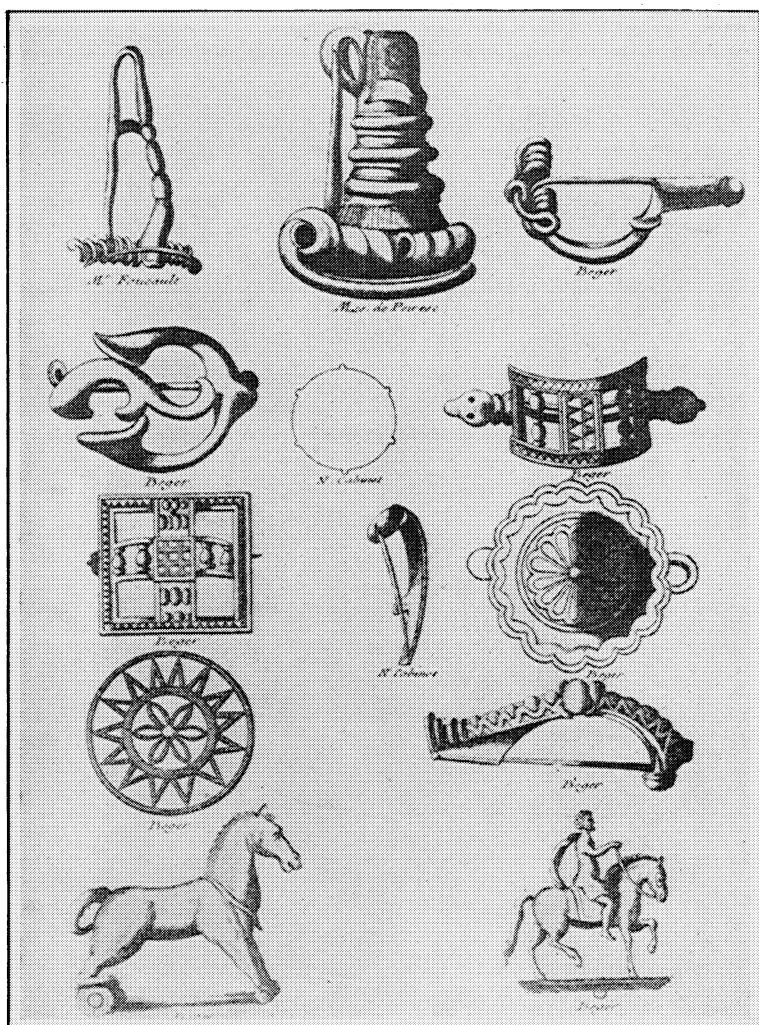
The most archaic Greek costume was no doubt of skins, for their prehistoric hero, Hercules, was pictured as dressed in a lion skin, with his head thrust through the mouth of the lion, and the skin fastened on by tying the fore paws in front of him.

To the Homeric heroes and heroines, buttons and hooks and eyes were still unknown, but safety pins had already come into common use. In fact even today the form of the safety pins found in an ancient deposit gives good indication of the date of the relics.



Graeco-Roman methods of fastening on footwear

In the typical Greek costume, the woman as well as the man wore next to the skin a chiton, which was of two chief types. The Doric style was a short shirt without sleeves, and fastened at the shoulders with safety pins or brooches. The Ionic chiton was a long slip with sleeves and not requiring pins. In archaic times, the Athenian women wore the Doric chiton, but they used



Graeco-Roman "fibulae," or brooches and safety pins

the pins from it to kill the sole Athenian survivor who returned from the war against Aegina. It was therefore decreed that thereafter they should wear the Ionic chiton which did not require pins.

After the Persian wars, however, the chiton was doubled over at the top and again fastened at the shoulders with safety pins or brooches.

Sometimes the sleeves of the chiton were left partly open and were fastened together at intervals with small brooches or possi-

bly buttons. There is even a picture of a woman's short slip being held up with narrow straps and brooches, which look very much like suspenders and buttons.

Over the chiton, the Greek women and men wore a himation or pallium, which was merely a large rectangular piece of cloth wrapped around the body and shoulders and required no fasteners.

Over the himation, the women in chilly weather wore a peplos or wide scarf, which required no sewing or pins. The men, however, as an outer garment wore a short mantle called a chalmys, which was fastened on the shoulders with a brooch.

The Roman costume was much like the Greek. Next to the skin both women and men wore a tunic with or without sleeves. If without sleeves, it might be fastened on the shoulders with brooches; and if with sleeves, they might be fastened on the top with brooches or possibly buttons. Over the tunic the men and at first the women both wore a toga, which was a long semi-circular piece of cloth wrapped from the right shoulder around the body, and then thrown back over the left shoulder. It required no fasteners, though brooches were sometimes worn for adornment. In classic times, the Roman women adopted the Greek pallium, which likewise required no fasteners.

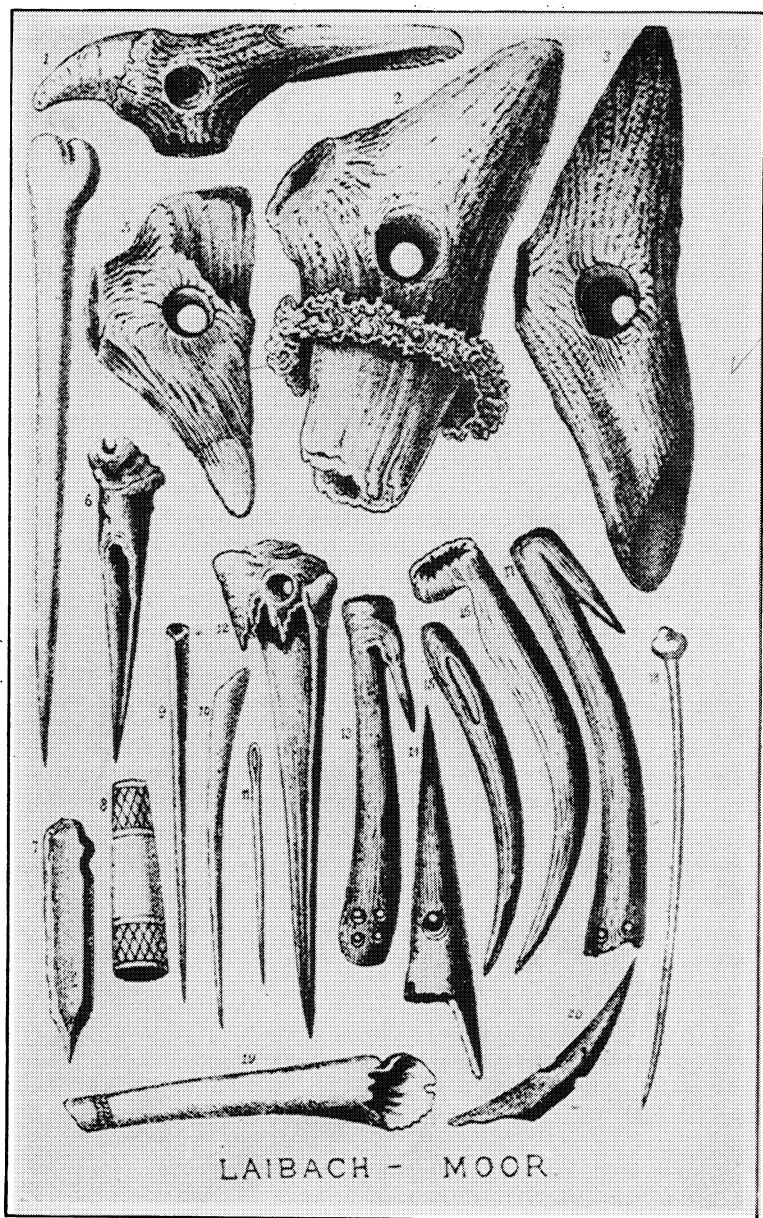
In place of the toga, young men often wore a mantle reaching only to the knees, and fastened at the right shoulder with a brooch. A similar though shorter mantle was used when riding.

Perhaps the most varied sorts of dress fasteners employed by the Romans were on their sandals and boots. Here the straps which held on the footwear were secured by many different kinds of knots, brooches, and buttons.

Toward the end of the Roman Empire the costume gradually changed. The outer garment became more like a cloak with sleeves, and sometimes the long trousers worn by the Gauls and Dacians were adopted by the Romans, and especially by the soldiers.

The trousers made good use of a sash which was sometimes merely tied, and sometimes held together with a brooch. The cloak, which was sometimes patterned after the skins worn by the barbarians, was frequently open in front, where frogs, buttons, or brooches were employed to hold it together.

From the nature of their garments, the barbarians made a much greater use of dress fasteners than the Romans, though these were of course crude in workmanship. From as early a period as the Lake Dwellings of Switzerland come bone pins, and wooden and bone frogs with bone hooks to



Bone hooks and other dress fastening devices from the Lake Dwellings

catch on them. There have even been found a few curved metal hooks, which might be considered the beginning of the hook and eye.

In the early Middle Ages the tendency toward the dress of the invaders was accentuated, the barbarian trousers becoming an accepted article of apparel, while over them was worn a long robe. Along with the new costume came in a much greater use of dress fasteners, and more varied sorts than employed by either the Greeks or Romans. While the brooch and safety pin were still used, buttons became far more common, and some examples are found of the frog and hook.

An illustration of a king in his coronation robe, about the middle of the 13th Century, not only gives a good idea of the long robe of the time, but is also proof that a new type of dress fastener, a buckle with a tongue, had already come into fashion. The king's robe is drawn around the waist by means of a belt, and the tongue of the belt buckle is distinctly shown in the picture.



A 13th century coronation robe having a belt buckle with a tongue

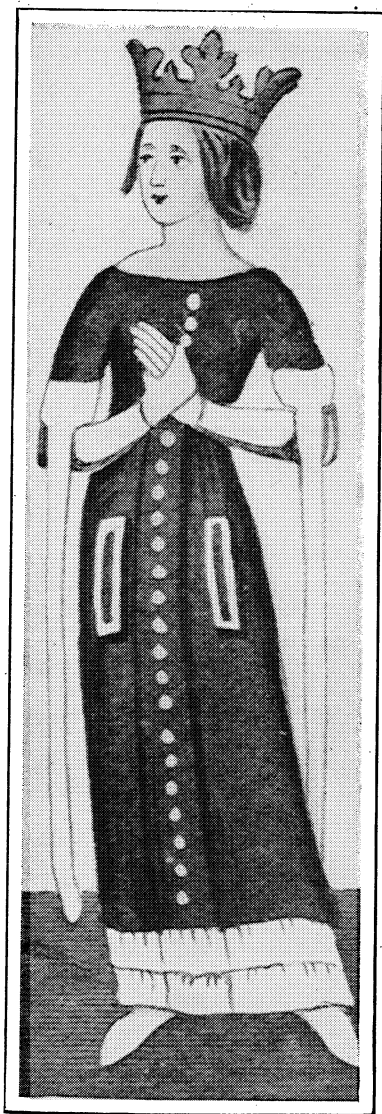
A close rival to the buckle with a tongue, and used for much the same purposes, was the clasp. This was used in the form of a hook in barbarian times, but was developed in the early Middle Ages, and became an ornament as well as a useful device. The safety pin and brooch were always subject to the objection that they penetrated and in time tore the cloth. Both the buckle and the clasp avoided this fault, and in addition could be sewed permanently on the garment. At the same time they gave greater freedom of adjustment than buttons.

They could be as decorative as a brooch and were sometimes heavily jewelled. One highly adorned clasp, for example, was presented by Queen Philippa to her son, John of Gaunt, who in turn willed it to his son, Henry IV of England.

Another new method of fastening the dress is depicted in a manuscript miniature of a royal lady of about 1260. The costume at that time was a long, rather closely fitted, gown, which was in fact so tight that it had to have an opening from the neck to the waist in



A 13th century costume with lacing
in front



A royal gown of the 14th century illustrating
the increased use of buttons

order to get into it. In many examples this opening was closed by more or less ornamental buttons, but in this illustration the opening is closed by lacing.

Some form of lacing had been used in footwear in ancient times, as well as to tie on armor, but its application to woman's dress was an important innovation.

In the 14th Century men's dress, instead of a long robe, was broken up into long tights extending to the waist, and a cote hardie which was like a jersey, and suitable to be worn over a breastplate of armor. The tights were laced to the tunic to hold them in place, and the cote hardie was laced or buckled down the front.

In the same century the long robe of the women was divided, in effect at least, by wearing over it a surcoat which extended from the shoulders to the hips. This was usually without sleeves, and was fastened down the front with ornamental buttons.

In the 15th Century the men continued to wear their tights, but again turned to a long robe extending from the shoulders to the feet. This was patterned after a monk's gown, and was bound in at the waist by a cord from which a purse was suspended by means of a buckle.

In the 16th Century a striking change appeared in women's costume in the form of the immense farthingale or hoop skirt. This was sometimes, though not always, fastened together down the front with buttons or clasps.

Along with the hoop skirt came in the bodice or corset, though some form of binding around the waist had been used at periods long before. The 16th Century bodice was a direct imitation of the knight's steel corslet, and was not much more supple. It was drawn in with laces with the avowed attempt at reducing the waist, and stiffened the figure until grace became impossible. It was said that the general impression given by a woman of the 16th and 17th Centuries was that of a wooden statue rising from the top of a bell.

In the meantime the long tights of the men were divided into short pantaloons and stockings, while the cote hardie developed into a coat open in front and ornamented with many buttons.

In the 16th Century the manufacture of silk, which had formerly been imported from the East, was taken up extensively in Italy, and the vogue of this lighter material created a demand for smaller and lighter dress fasteners. This made the hook and eye more useful and popular. Its manufacture was also made more easy by the application of water power to wire drawing,



A gown of the French Revolutionary period,
with dress fasteners at the shoulders
and knee

and from that period until recent times we find it occupying an important place in the gown maker's art.

In the 18th Century the hoop skirt was laid aside for the bustle and panniers on a gown which was frequently intended to have an invisible opening fastened with hooks and eyes. At the end of the century in France, women for a time laid aside all disguises of the figure, and tried to imitate the Greek chiton or Roman tunic. Although this extreme of daring simplicity was not maintained, it is a fact that dress has been far more simple during the last century than for several hundred years before it.

The past century might be called the Age of Invention, and most of its greatest discoveries have eventually been applied to increasing human comfort and happiness, with the result that the average workman today enjoys greater conveniences

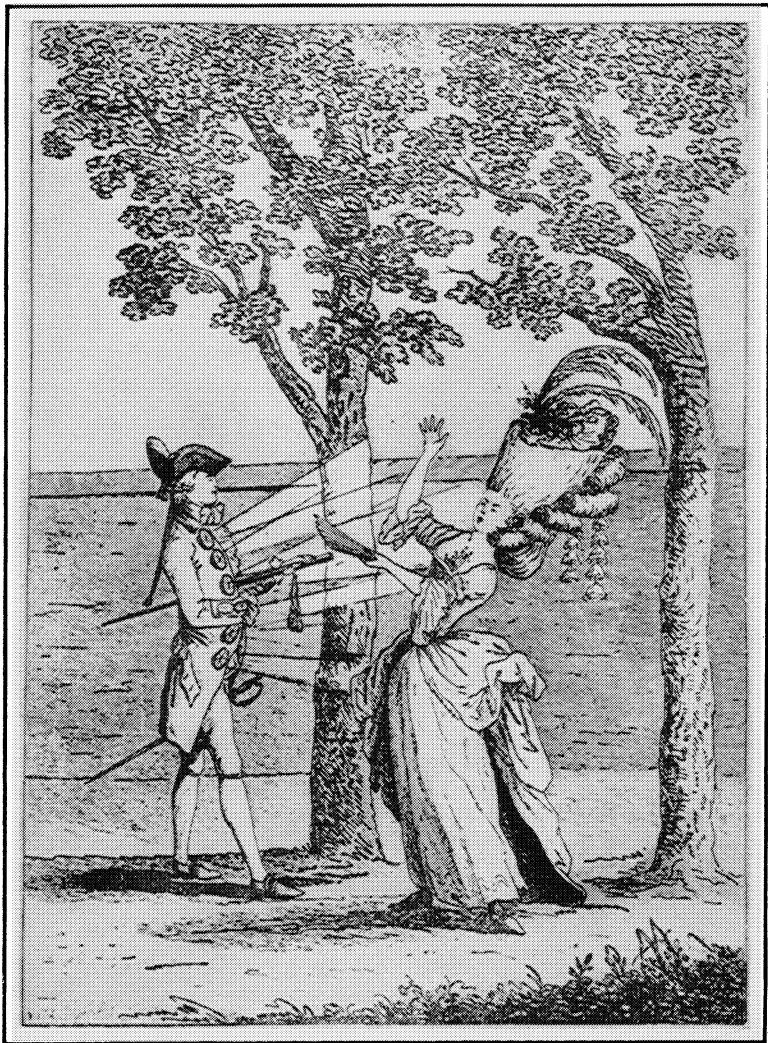
in every-day life than the monarch of a few centuries ago.

A casual consideration will discover that all the dress fasteners known to former times had their objections. The buckle and brooch were too heavy for sheer materials, the safety pin tore them, and hooks and eyes were both hard to work and soon got out of order. In attempting to improve on these fasteners, the first inventions were designed for gloves.

Gauntlets had given way to a closely fitted glove, and a method was needed of fastening it which would not interfere with the tightness and fit. Progress was made in this direction by a French device called an *agrofte*, which was made of metal with a steel spring working as a lever through an eyelet. It was at first sewed on in the regular way, but later attached by means of metal plates and teeth. The lever, however, caught in laces and fabrics, and if touched was liable to open. For these reasons it proved impractical.

About 1870 buttons riveted to the garment by means of eyelets came into use for men's wear, and are still employed for certain purposes. About the same time the leather industry started to use a riveted button which could be closed by turning a smaller button inside of it.

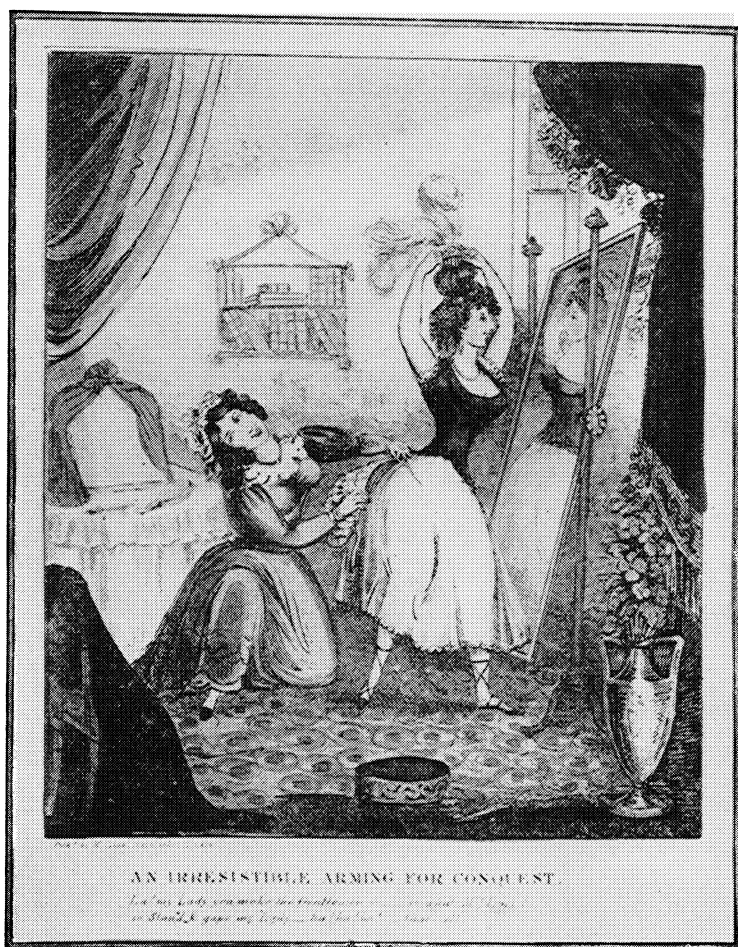
A short time later a French inventor, by the name of Ramon, brought out a fastening device for gloves which is still on the



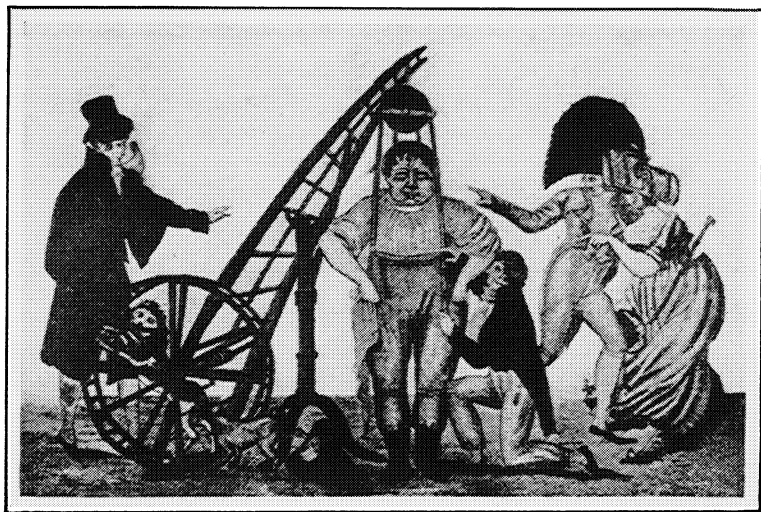
An 18th century caricature of the new cut steel buttons

market. Attempts were made to use it on shoes, belts, ties, and even skirts, but apparently without permanent success.

About 1890 a sewed-on fastener with a regular spring so that it could be made in almost any size, was successfully tried out for all sorts of garments. It was then discovered that its practical manufacture required many kinds of specially adapted machinery. Thus another industry came into the world, and the patent applications for the machinery and metals to make such fasteners, as well as for various types of fasteners, number thousands in the different countries.



A caricature on fastening in the bustle about 80 years ago



A caricature of a century ago on the methods of holding up the tight pantaloons



A caricature on fastening in the slender waists the middle of the 19th century



Caught smuggling in the days of the hoopskirt

As always among many new inventions, so only one of these various fasteners survived through its undoubted superiority. This is the KOH-I-NOOR, which is at present universally used and recognized as the ideal for men's, women's, and children's clothes, as well as for upholstery, decorative purposes, theatrical uses, and the like.

How much the dress fastener has influenced styles and habits, and how much satisfaction and convenience it has brought to many millions, can scarcely be conceived. No matter what further technical developments may take place, it is certain that the dress fastener KOH-I-NOOR has already left a mark in the development of culture and civilization which will not be forgotten.



A caricature from the early days of the corset

The Waldes Museum

A visualization of the influence of dress fasteners on costume, as well as the intrinsic interest of their evolution, led to the founding, by Henry Waldes, of the Waldes Museum for the purpose of collecting dress fastening devices, and investigating their history and influence.

This museum is located in Prague, Czechoslovakia, and, although started as a private museum, was in 1918 transferred to the public. It occupies a building of its own, and is under the charge of an administrator, who is a historian of art, and of an able board of trustees.

While confining itself to dress fastening devices, its scope in this field is the broadest, as it gathers relics and specimens from all epochs and countries.

It includes in part:

- A. Collections of dress fastening devices of all times, countries, and methods.
- B. Collections of illustrations of dress fastening devices.
- C. Collections of illustrations of costumes showing the methods of fastening employed.
- D. A library, and historic and technical archives in which are kept the written sources for the study of the main questions within the scope of the museum.
- E. Other functions of the museum include exhibitions, lectures, public reports, and monographs.

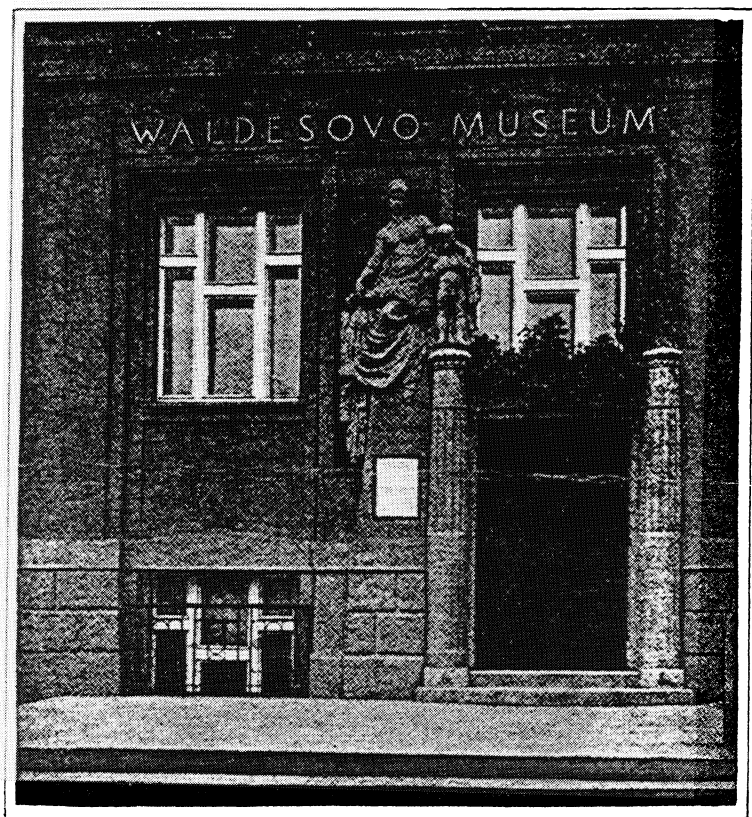
In accordance with the plan of the museum to cover not only all times but all countries, the collections in several of the rooms are arranged to give a chronological view of the evolution of dress fastening devices from prehistoric to recent times, while in the ethnographic department the dress fasteners peculiar to tribes, races, and provinces, are arranged geographically. Thus are disclosed both the development of such devices throughout time, and their spread from one land to another.

Years of research have disclosed that the field of dress fastening devices is far larger and of greater import than at first supposed even by investigators on the subject, and much time must elapse before the many mysteries in this field shall be solved, and before the varied chronological and casual inter-relations of these devices with costumes and with one another can be reduced to order. Nevertheless the museum has made a splendid start, and as the one institution of its kind in the world is probably

fitted to develop the subject better than can be done through any other medium.

The entire museum is open to the public, and at its service. Its interest and popularity may be judged by the fact that the visitors average about 150 daily.

It is visited by many tourists, and all Americans who stop at Prague are especially invited to call at the museum, where they will be most cordially shown through its interesting and significant collections.



The Waldes Museum